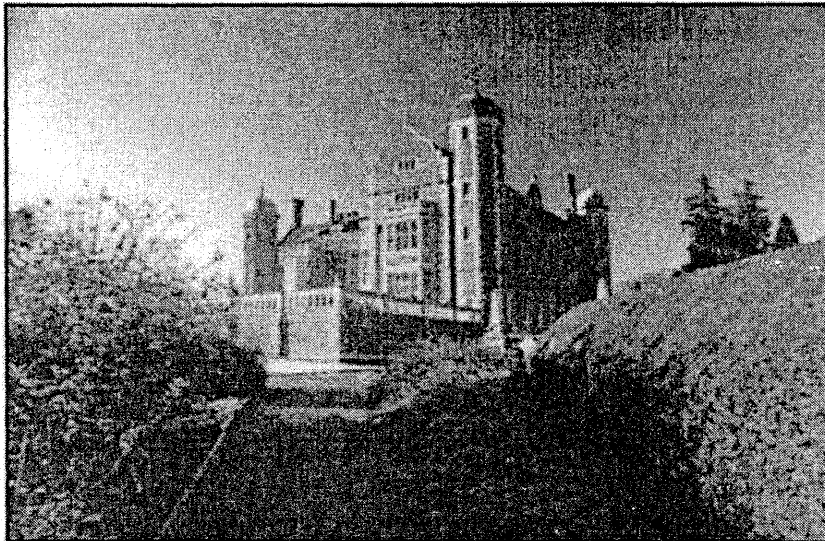


**The 10th Cambridge International Conference on
Open and Distance Learning**
In association with The Commonwealth of Learning

The Future of Open and Distance Learning
Madingley Hall, Cambridge



Supplementary Conference Paper
September 2003

Edited by Anne Gaskell and Alan Tait

The Open University
Cambridge

**The 10th Cambridge International
Conference on Open and Distance Learning**

**The Future of Open and
Distance Learning**

Supplementary Conference Paper

September 2003

Edited by Anne Gaskell and Alan Tait

2003 Edited by Anne Gaskell and Alan Tait

The Open University in the East of England
Cintra House
12 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB2 1PF

ISBN 0 7492 6676 7

Cambridge Conference on Open and Distance Learning
The Future of Open and Distance Learning

Contents

		Page
Anne Gaskell & Alan Tait	Introduction: The Future of Open and Distance Learning	1
Elena Brunova	The impact of information technologies on the contents of teaching activity	6
Marquis L Bureau, Joan Collinge & Yvonne Tabin	A multi level analysis of the impact of technology on organisational structures	9
Troy Cooper & Sue Hemmings	The changing identity of 'tutor' and 'student' in the Open University, UK and its consequences for learning and teaching	16
Gail Crawford	Psychiatric Nursing: Access, Flexibility and Convergence?	23
Hisham Dzakiria & Rob Walker	The culturally diverse Malaysian distance learners: are the Chinese distance learners different from their Malay counterpart?	29
Graham Gibbs	The future of student retention in Open and Distance Learning	37
Kathleen Gilmartin	AL world – a new way of delivering support for UK Open University tutors	49
Charles Juwah & Brent Muirhead	Widening access in Higher Education in the United Kingdom: an alternative model	55
Patrick Kelly & Frauke Noelker	Personal Development Planning: pulling student support together	65
Janet MacDonald & Liz Bennett	Supporting Open Learning in a changing environment: the SOLACE project	74

		Page
Alan Mandell & Lee Herman	A day in the life of Open Learning	82
Elizabeth Manning	The appropriateness of distance learning at higher educational level for students aged 16-17	89
Juan Melendez	Distance education for teacher education reform	96
Daithí Ó Murchú & Elsebeth Korsgaard Sorensen	'Mastering' Communities of Practice across Cultures and National Borders	102
Som Naidu	Learning by doing: directing assessment to optimise the quality of student learning experience	111
Mercy F. Ogunsola-Bandele	Can NOUN accommodate me, my grades and my work?	117
Jennifer O'Rourke	The Procrustean paradigm: a fable of conflicting values in Online Learning and Distance Education	122
Theophilus Aquinas Ossei-Anto	Distance and Open Learning at the University of Education, Winneba	132
Anniekie Ninowiseni Ravhudzulo	The changing role of the tutor in Distance Education	140
Ormond Simpson	The future of Open and Distance Learning – will we go on failing our students?	147
Ian Walcott	The commoditisation of Higher Education and the e-learning revolution	155
Alison West	Widening Participation: the role of community development and community education	162
Alexander Zakharov & Irina Zakharova	The Role of University Electronic Library in modern approaches to the organisation of Distance Learning	167
<u>Supplementary Paper</u> Alan Cutting	Flexible Learning Programmes for Pre-Service Teacher Education: Some Key Issues	172

Flexible Learning Programmes for Pre-Service Teacher Education: Some Key Issues

Alan Cutting
Auckland College of Education, New Zealand

Preamble

Auckland College of Education is New Zealand's largest provider of pre-service and in-service programmes for professionals in the field of education. Until recently, flexible learning initiatives in the College have concentrated on upgrades from Diplomas to undergraduate Degrees, Masters Degrees, and a range of specialist programmes in areas such as communication and information technology, language and literacy, and Māori and Pasifika education. In 2002 flexible learning was introduced into full-time pre-service programmes, starting with an early childhood education course in that year, followed by secondary teachers in 2003. A primary course is planned for 2004.

In order to meet the strict teacher registration requirements, the College had to show that its flexi-initiatives were able to provide students with a programme of study that was fully equivalent to "conventional" face-to-face programmes and that would enable the graduates to enter the teaching profession as fully trained professionals. Aspects that were under particular scrutiny included:

- student selection
- practicum requirements
- teaching of so-called "practical" subjects
- addressing the needs of people for whom English is not a first language.

This paper examines some of the ways in which the College has addressed these issues, and looks at support structures that have been put in place to ensure continuing excellence throughout the programmes.

Provision of Teacher Training in New Zealand

Teacher training in New Zealand has traditionally been undertaken in specialist colleges. Established mainly in the late 19th century as "Teacher Training Colleges", they were reformed and expanded in the 1980's to become "Colleges of Education". Some of the smaller establishments were also combined to form larger ones at this time.

The reforms of the 1980's also saw an opening in the training provider market to allow others, funded by both the state and private sectors, to enter it.

As at March 2003 there are 32 institutions that are approved as providers of teacher training programmes. 21 of these are early childhood providers, 19 primary, and 12 secondary. Nine of them, including Auckland College of Education, provide training for all three sectors. Many of the institutions have several campuses and offer distance/open/mixed mode learning opportunities. Others work in the Māori language medium or in a combination of English and Māori.

The six major Teacher Training Colleges/Colleges of Education (all government funded) were located in six major cities: Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. In the past ten years, all of these have entered into partnerships with nearby universities. Several have formally amalgamated, and others are in various stages of negotiations that will ultimately lead to amalgamation or integration. Auckland College of Education is slated to become the major part of the Faculty of Education at the University of Auckland from early 2004. When this happens, the Faculty will be the largest provider of teacher training in the country, with in excess of 4500 equivalent full-time students.

A Brief Background to Teacher Training in New Zealand

Pre-service professional training of teachers in New Zealand has followed patterns set in other countries. One or two year certificates gave way to two and three year diplomas, which in turn have become three year degrees and post-graduate diplomas. Programmes of study were, and still are (in most instances) targeted at early childhood education, primary education or secondary education.

Currently, the "normal qualification" for a fully trained teacher entering the profession is as follows:

Early Childhood Education

- a three-year diploma, or
- a three year specialist degree in early childhood education

Auckland College of Education plans to introduce a one year Graduate Diploma in Education for early childhood from 2004. A Bachelor's Degree in a subject area will be a required entry qualification.

Primary Education

- a three year Bachelor's Degree specializing in primary education, or
- a three year Bachelor's Degree in a subject area, followed by a one year specialist Graduate Diploma in primary education.

Secondary Education

- a (minimum) three year Bachelor's Degree (or its equivalent) in a subject area, followed by a one year specialist Graduate Diploma in secondary education.

Registration of Teachers

From February 2001, the New Zealand Teachers Council became the arm of Government responsible for "providing professional leadership in teaching, enhancing the professional status of teachers in schools and early childhood education, and contributing to a safe and high quality teaching and learning environment for children and other learners."¹ Amongst their many roles is the requirement that they register people approved as teachers. Such people must have both an approved training qualification and experience as a satisfactory practitioner.

The Education Act requires all school authorities (i.e. state and private schools) and free kindergarten associations to employ only teachers who are registered, or who are appointed temporarily under a limited authority to teach (LAT). Some Māori schools are exempt. Registration is optional for teachers in other parts of the general education system, such as early childhood centres (other than free kindergartens) and tertiary institutions.

Approval of Teacher Training Programmes

The Teachers Council also plays a significant role in the approval process for all programmes of study for teachers, both pre-service and in-service. This is done in conjunction with national quality assurance agencies.

Until the late 1990s, such approvals were granted with little or no reference to the mode of programme delivery. Several providers were “dabbling” in other than face-to-face delivery, largely by providing upskilling programmes for practising teachers who were looking to either upgrade their existing qualifications or to gain specialist expertise in a particular area. These were many and varied in their delivery approaches. Some providers opted for a “block course” approach, with students coming on campus for several weekend sessions throughout the year. Others chose to use a conventional distance/correspondence type of delivery based on study guides and required assignment tasks, with very little attention to ongoing teaching, formative feedback, or student support.

The approval-granting agencies started to become more interested in the delivery process, however, when providers began to propose flexible delivery options for **pre-service programmes**. Concerns were raised relating to the quality of such programmes as required by the Teachers Council. These concerns focused on:

- integration of theory and practice throughout the programme
- experience of a wide variety of contexts for teaching, i.e. with different age groups of students, socio-economic and cultural environments, teaching approaches and philosophies, types of organization and management, and varied communities
- provision of a learning environment that ensured the same level of support, both academically and in a pastoral context, as was being provided to face-to-face students
- access to sufficient tertiary level library resources, technology resources, and teaching resources for all curriculum areas.

Teacher Shortages in New Zealand

There are severe teacher shortages in New Zealand at all levels. Factors contributing to this are fairly predictable:

- Salaries are not attractive compared with those on offer to other graduates. Salaries for early childhood teachers have been extremely low. However, a recent government initiative has given rise to pay parity throughout all education sectors (apart from the tertiary sector and those institutions that are privately funded). This essentially means that teachers who start their career with equivalent qualifications will receive the same starting salary, whether they are employed in early childhood, primary or secondary schools. This decision has, in turn, given rise to further debate over the duration of primary/early childhood Bachelor degrees, and whether or not they should take 4 years rather than the present 3.
- A lot of new graduates prefer to take time out after graduation to travel overseas, rather than start their teaching careers immediately.
- Male student numbers in primary, and even more so in early childhood, teacher training programmes have dropped dramatically. A lot of this can be put down to widely publicized instances of child abuse, perceived or otherwise, involving males

and male teachers. The reality is now that there are a large number of schools that are staffed entirely by females.

- The population of the country is much more mobile than it was in the past. Partners of teachers, who move location because of their own employment situation, frequently take their teacher partner (and family) with them. This gives rise to instability within the profession.
- Schools in remote or isolated areas have great difficulty in attracting teachers.
- There are particular shortages in the curriculum areas of science, technology and Māori language teaching at the secondary level.

As a result, many schools have been forced into employing under-qualified teachers, un-registered teachers, or teachers who have had little or no formal training - a situation that the government is not happy with.

Addressing the Teacher Shortage

The government has put into place a number of strategies aimed at both reducing the teacher shortage and at the same time upskilling the large number of untrained teachers (estimated to number some 3000) in the school system. Many of these have been implemented through existing training providers, and many have utilized flexible teaching and learning approaches in order to target a wide market.

In 2001, Auckland College of Education was awarded a contract to develop and implement a total of 21 modules (papers) to upskill teachers working in primary and secondary schools located in communities that are predominately attended by Māori and Pasifika children in the Auckland area. The targeted teachers were all un-registered and working with limited authority to teach (LAT), and were being paid at a lower rate than their fully registered colleagues. For most of them who completed a full training programme utilizing the 21 modules, along with additional ones used in mainstream College programmes, it would mean the award of a Diploma or a Graduate Diploma, along with eligibility for full teacher registration by the Teachers Council.

Module materials consisted primarily of print-based study guides, supplemented by some videotapes and audiotapes, and supported by an infrastructure of toll-free telephone links, a WebCT on-line learning platform (for those who had reliable internet access), face-to-face meetings, an assignment tracking service and a development programme for all academic staff involved in the writing and teaching of the modules.

The development of the modules was completed successfully and on time, and the completed materials met with the general approval of both the Ministry of Education (who awarded the contract) and the New Zealand Teachers Council. It was the latter group, however, who raised the concerns that were mentioned earlier. These will be addressed later in this paper.

A small cohort of 35 students began the programme in mid-2001, and 10 of them are expected to complete it in the minimum 2-year period and graduate in mid-2003. These were all full-time teachers, studying as part-time students, and it was clear that the workload, based on a recommended study time of 25-30 hours per week, has proved too difficult to maintain in most cases.

Further Developments

In the post-contract period that has followed, all 21 modules have now been incorporated into regular College programmes. In addition, a lot more modules (118 in total), including some complete programmes, have now been developed for flexible offering. Included in these are:

- the complete 3-year Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood), available by part-time or full-time study, and to be upgraded to the Bachelor of Education degree from 2004
- the Graduate Diploma of Teaching (Secondary), with curriculum specialties in most areas, available by part-time or full-time study
- the upskill pathway to the Bachelor of Education (Primary), for practising teachers, available part-time only.

In mid-late 2002, the College submitted a proposal to the New Zealand Teachers Council and the government quality assurance and accreditation agencies to seek blanket approval for all teacher education programmes to be offered flexibly – the way in which this flexibility would be exhibited would depend on the nature of the programme (and its component modules), as well as the particular circumstances that might surround the cohort of students admitted. Our target student groups typically have included communities that are predominantly Pacific Island or *kiwi* (Māori) based, and this would give us the option to tailor or “flavour” particular modules to meet the special needs of those groups.

The proposal was treated with initial caution by the authorities. It was clear to the College that they had some reservations, and so the unusual step was taken to invite all validating groups to the campus to discuss the proposal, and see how we were addressing the concerns they had.

Following this meeting, the approvals we sought were granted.²

The Multi-mode Flexible Approach to Teacher Education

Auckland College of Education decided to centralise the development and design of its flexible modules within one central unit – the Centre of Educational Design and Development (CEDD). Formed in November 2000 by the author, this Centre now has a full-time staff establishment of 11, including 4 educational designers (all classified as academic staff), 2 editors/desktop publishers, a web/multimedia designer, a video production team of 2, and 3 administrators. In addition, part-time staff are employed at peak periods to help with scanning to produce electronic versions of print materials and to assist in the packaging and mail-out of module packages.

One of our objectives when designing our flexible modules was to ensure that what was being taught flexibly was fully equivalent to the face-to-face version. And to meet our desire to target a variety of student groups, we had to consider alternatives/variations at all times. Typically, a flexible module will contain a combination from or selection of:

- print items, with links to web sites as appropriate
- videotapes
- audio tapes
- CD ROMs

- a WebCT site, with links to other web sites as appropriate
- face-to-face sessions, either on the Auckland campus or elsewhere
- audio-conference links
- video-conference sessions.

Print items generally form the starting point and basis of the module package and within these is a *Module Handbook* that has in it everything the student should need to be able to navigate through the module itself. The handbook contains such items as a *Module Map* and *Key Dates Sheet*, along with assignment details, bar-coded cover sheets for assignments, and a welcome/introduction from the class lecturer. Much of this is likely to be reproduced on the WebCT site as well, but feedback from students indicates very clearly that they prefer a hard copy version to have on hand at all times. To avoid any unnecessary confusion, and to make module navigation easier, a standardised layout is used with all modules. This involves a set of common icons, and the extensive use of white space that students are encouraged to use.

Support for Learning

Students are all issued with a *Guide to Flexible Learning*³ booklet that we have produced in-house. This details all the support services that are available to students. These include free (from within New Zealand) telephone calls to the College using an 0800 number, access to the College Library via telephone, fax or email and to two dedicated flexi-services librarians, assistance with health and special support needs, and so on. Our aim has been to make, as far as possible, every student service that is provided to face-to-face students also available to those studying off-campus.

We encourage all students to have access on a regular basis to the internet, and every module has a WebCT site set up to facilitate on-line teaching and support. The reality is that only about 93% of the flexible students have such access. And for some of these, the internet service can be marginal due to poor telephone line connections, unreliable computer equipment, or restrictions on entry to the place where the equipment is housed. The last of these is rather unfortunate, particularly for teachers who are undertaking upskilling programmes. All schools in New Zealand have been provided with internet connection and computer equipment, and staff members normally have access to these. In many remote areas, however, schools are frequently locked and students bussed off home as soon as classes finish, leaving no time for teachers to do any continued study. So for all flexible modules, we endeavour to provide alternative means of communication wherever possible.

Educational Design Issues

Student support is also a major consideration within the design process for each module. The development of modules is normally done in teams. CEDD provides an Educational Designer as one member of the team, the teaching centre provides one or more members as the content/subject expert(s), and others are added as appropriate to help with things like video or multimedia production, and website development. The role of the Educational Designer is to:

- offer pedagogical advice as to how the module is structured and what types of resource/delivery is going to be most effective
- play a “Devil’s Advocate” role in an effort to ensure that students will be able to understand what the module is all about
- ensure that real and effective teaching is taking place throughout the module and that students have good opportunities to interact with their teachers and fellow students,

and obtain formative feedback that will help them with summative assessment tasks that are set

- co-ordinate the production of the final resources.

Issues Surrounding Practicum

Teaching practicums form a key role in any teacher training programmes, and were one of the major concerns of the validating authorities when Auckland College of Education applied for approvals to offer flexible programmes for pre-service teachers.

We have tackled the problem in several differing ways.

1. For students who are not currently working in a school or early childhood centre:

These people are assigned a "link school" (or centre in the case of early childhood students). This is usually a school that is nearby to their home, and where they can go to use resources, observe children in classroom situations, and talk with teachers. The College assists in making these placements and linkages, but the students themselves make arrangements as necessary to actually visit the schools when they need to. A strict set of guidelines is drawn up, making quite clear the nature of the linkage, which is very much of a good will arrangement. The school receives no remuneration for their part.

When it comes to formal practicum, flexible students are dealt with in exactly the same way as face-to-face students. They are assigned to a variety of schools at various times during their study, undertake various teaching assignments, and are visited by College staff at regular intervals. Schools do receive remuneration for their contribution to the formal practicum periods.

2. For students who are working as teachers already and are studying to gain a qualification that will give them either full registration or a higher qualification:

Working closely with a colleague within their school, they develop a project which looks at directions for their own professional development and follows this up with a critical analysis of their own teaching practice. Finally, after establishing goals and strategic plans, they plan, teach and assess a series of lessons with different classes.

A formal practicum assessment, of the type undertaken of those who are not practising teachers, is not made in this case.

Face-to-Face Sessions

We have concluded that face-to-face sessions for many of the modules we have developed are hugely beneficial. After two years of saying that these were optional only, we have now changed our regulations to insist that all full-time students attend the equivalent of two mandatory on-campus weeks (i.e. 10 days) each year. In some cases it is more prudent to take the campus to the students, so to speak, and staff go off to areas where there is a group of students, and do the face-to-face component there.

Face-to-face sessions tend to be whole programme focused, rather than being specific to any one module. The first one, which is held close to the start of the programme, deals with issues such as resource acquisition, use of IT, good study habits and an introduction to the teaching profession. Others go on to look at things like reflective practice, assessment, the school environment, and various practical subject areas.

On-line Learning

As mentioned earlier, an on-line learning site is set up for all flexible delivery modules. We use WebCT as the platform for these, but this might well change in the future, mainly due to increasing costs of the software. Our main use of WebCT is to facilitate discussions, exchange ideas, work collaboratively on projects and provide an easy communication channel within each module. It certainly helps bring a community spirit into what could become an isolated learning environment. Unfortunately, our College firewall prevents us from having any form of synchronous discussion, although we hope to be able to rectify this soon.

We tend *not* to use WebCT for delivering module materials in bulk, or for providing additional resources such as readings and journal articles that students will have to download and print out.

Conclusion

Flexible learning methods can be used to facilitate the professional education and development of teachers. However, a robust institutional infrastructure is essential to ensure a quality programme.

Well designed flexible learning materials can be tailored to meet the particular needs of community groups. This has been very useful in our situation where the multicultural nature of our student population is an important factor that needs full and proper consideration.

¹ <http://www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz/01/01b.htm>

² Private correspondence from Hon Trevor Mallard, Minister of Education, to Auckland College of Education, 29 November 2002.

³ <http://www.ace.ac.nz/learning/fl/guide.asp>